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INTERCOLLEGIATE FOOTBALL.

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FOOTBALL has acquired such a hold upon the American people that the question of its merits or demerits as a game must force itself upon every one's attention. Its opponents are just now clamorous. Its supporters, even with nothing to say that has not already been well said, must have the courage of their convictions. In attempting to discuss this matter briefly, it is essential to have a clearly defined point of view. It may well be that football is a useful sport in a large university, where it can be controlled by rigid rule; and yet an evil thing amongst boys, or voluntary associations, or the general youthful public who are under no bonds and who are not to be governed by any laws. The universities of Harvard and Pennsylvania may through their respective teams meet one another upon the field in a gentlemanly manner; and yet rival cycling or boating clubs, or rival gangs of street boys, may make football an excuse for fighting out their jealousies.

The question whether in the community football is or is not a good thing is, however, entirely separate from the question whether it is a good thing in a university. To the first of these questions we do not propose to-day to offer any answer at all, since the space allotted is too small really properly to discuss the one question in which we, as professors in a great university, are most interested. In attempting to answer it a few preliminary truisms must be pardoned, that the line of thought which influences us may be clearly stated.

We know that in every position in life which a man can occupy a fairly developed frame is of great advantage to him ; that, *ceteris paribus*, the man who possesses health is able to do better work than his rival who lacks it ; that health includes in its very essence the idea of a certain amount of strength, and that, to acquire health and strength and the full development upon which they depend, exercise is essential. We know that however admirable systems of collegiate gymnastics may be (and we are firm believers in their value), they often fail in supplying the mental stimulus which in competitive athletics react so beneficially on the grosser tissues. Just as certain areas in the brain and spinal cord atrophy after the removal of a limb, so do all the centres presiding over movement grow and develop when varied exercise is taken, and with them the co-ordinate centres that control the higher cerebral functions. The more varied the exercise, and the more it awakens interest and brings into play the mental faculties, the more beneficial it is to the mind and body reciprocally.

We feel sure that these propositions are demonstrably true. Their application to football seems to us obvious. Let us regard intercollegiate athletics as supplementary to a well-devised system of physical education such as ought to exist at every university and college. The noteworthy contests (exclusive of track athletics which tend to develop specialists in whom one set of muscles is over-developed, but which are of undoubted value to the student body) are those which take place on the river, the baseball field, the tennis court, and cricket ground. Which of them best fulfils the requirements of an ideal exercise ?

Rowing, as practised to-day, develops chiefly the muscles of the back and hips ; it does little for the front arm, practically nothing for the pectoral muscles. Baseball makes but little demand on the left arm or the left side of the chest. Cricket and tennis are also usually "right-sided" games. None of them is to be compared with football in the direction of bringing *all* muscles in play. And, moreover, in none of them except rowing is the preliminary training, so valuable in strengthening the great involuntary muscles, those of the heart and diaphragm, observed with anything like equal strictness.

Certainly whatever physical good can be received from any form of college athletics can be obtained from football, while

above all others it tends to develop self-control, coolness, fertility of resource, and promptness of execution in sudden emergencies involving perhaps personal danger. In other words, no known game compares with football in the development in the individual of those qualities which, while they are sometimes spoken of as the "military virtues," are of enormous value to their possessor in all the struggles of life. A further advantage of football over the other forms of college athletics is that it appeals to a much larger proportion of the men. Thus, probably not more than fifty men in any way take part in the annual training for crews at Pennsylvania; but during the present season, 1893, what with the Varsity team, the scrub teams, the various class teams, and the number of voluntary teams made up of the students, at least 160 men have played the game, many of them daily. About the same number played at Harvard.

These are our chief reasons for approving intercollegiate football. Let us consider the objections.

One who sees for the first time a mass-play in a great game, with a pyramid of struggling bodies; or hears the thump as a man is thrown upon the ground by a hard tackle; or notes the bloody faces and sometimes bloody jackets of the contestants; is very apt to be impressed with the idea that some one must soon be desperately injured or killed, an opinion which grows in strength as he sees man after man assisted or carried from the field, while a substitute steps into his place. Then, if perchance months of parliamentary struggle and newspaper discussion concerning an "undergraduate rule," or some other method of getting rid of a growing rival, has intensified the natural spirit of combat between the colleges, and "slugging" or foul or rough play is indulged in, a confirmed belief in the hopeless brutality of the game fastens itself on the mind of the uninformed observer, who often sincerely believes that he is unprejudiced because he knows nothing about the matter; very much as Sydney Smith is said to have asserted that he never read a book he was to criticise, in order that he might keep his mind free from bias. To those who think that bloody noses, torn ears, blackened eyes, bruises or sprains, or an occasional scalp wound are mighty evils, the game must always be an objectionable one. But to those of us who believe that in the

life of a boy the occurrence of injuries not severe enough to leave permanent traces is not necessarily an evil, but often even a positive good by encouraging fortitude, manliness, and high spirit, the question as to the danger of football in our colleges is only to be answered by absolute statistics.

It must be remembered that we are considering intercollegiate football, as played in this country ; and that all English statistics, based, as they are, upon a game essentially different from American football, played, too, by miners, laborers, and all kinds of people, are foreign to this discussion. The great institutions which this matter most concerns, and which are its representatives at the bar of public opinion, are Princeton, Yale, Harvard, and Pennsylvania. About this time last year the question of the occurrence of fatal or of permanently disabling injury to any football player at these four institutions for the previous decade was submitted by one of the writers to the special authority on the subject in each faculty. The replies, still in his possession, were sent after careful investigation, and established conclusively the fact that *no instance of any permanent injury to a player had occurred in all the long series of contests waged during those ten years on the football field.* We ask that until contradictory and well-sustained evidence be brought forward this statement be accepted on the authority of Dr. Sargent, of Cambridge ; Dr. Seaver, of New Haven ; Dr. Macdonald, of Princeton ; and Dr. White, of Philadelphia. We may add that Dr. Hitchcock has written us that no player has ever suffered permanent injury at Cornell. We know that so far as intercollegiate football among these universities is concerned, the foregoing is true of 1893 also, and we think this fact greatly lessens the force of the objection based on the physical dangers of the game.

We have had, as has been said, about 160 men playing football during the year 1893 at Pennsylvania and without a single broken bone or a seriously injured joint or any accident disabling a player from continuing either his football or his academic duties for any length of time. We do not mean to deny the existence of physical danger, but we believe it possible to minimize it and yet retain all the most useful features of the game, and we are urgent for such a revision of rules as shall bring this to pass. We do insist, however, that the spectacular character of foot-

ball and the frequency of sprains, wrenches, fractures, and other severe or minor injuries occurring in the presence of such multitudes have together led to unintentional and not unnatural exaggeration of the seriousness of football. The accidents of aquatic sports, of horseback riding, of shooting, are vastly beyond and above those of football. In 1890, 4,442 males were drowned in the United States, and 2,336 died from gunshot wounds; a large minority of the former died in the pursuit of aquatic sports, whilst, probably, a large majority of the latter died from accidents occurring with firearms made or used for sport. We have not had time to get together the statistics of aquatic sports in the colleges, but it is noteworthy that within two or three years Princeton lost, by drowning, Brokaw from its baseball team, and Lamar from its football team, whilst Cornell, where aquatics are cultivated so widely and successfully, has in the same way lost at least three of its athletes in the present year.

The allegations as to the demoralizing influence of college football have taken various directions. It has been said, for example, to encourage "professionalism" on the part of the athletic authorities and of the players themselves. The enormous gate receipts of some of the great football games have especially aroused attention, and have given rise to the belief that the game was being played for revenue solely or chiefly. It should, however, be understood that large sums of money are required for the maintenance of the athletic departments of the greater universities, and especially for the legitimate expenses of football itself, and that it is the only college sport which yields revenue; so that the expenses of the whole year have to be largely met from the moneys received from football enthusiasts. When it is remembered that large sums for the maintenance of athletics are yearly contributed by the students themselves, and probably still larger sums by alumni and other persons outside of the immediate college circles; and that, notwithstanding this, many, if not most, of the athletic departments are chronically and sometimes hopelessly in debt, it will be seen that whilst the gate receipts are undoubtedly important to the athletic interests of the institutions involved, they cannot be of direct importance to the players, and that there are many avenues for their honest use. In this respect again the objection to football is really not relevant to the game

itself, but to college athletics as a whole; if these athletics be useful, the fact that they are largely supported by football is an argument for, and not against, the continuance of the game.

The more serious charge that men are bought or bribed to come to certain colleges for the purpose primarily of playing football is one that has been made in reference to other college sports. The temptations in this direction undoubtedly increase with the apparent importance of the game to the university playing it and with the honors and rewards attendant upon success; but we are sure that other college sports have in the past been far more open to this criticism than has football. It is a matter which should be carefully considered by the respective faculties and a proper remedy agreed upon. Personally we believe that the adoption of the "one year's residence rule," which forbids any student taking part in intercollegiate athletics until he has resided an academic year at his university and passed satisfactory examinations upon a full year's work, will prove curative.

Other suggestions, such as the selection of a central body, in New York or elsewhere, to decide on questions of eligibility, seem to us open to grave and obvious objection, but the whole matter is one which does not belong exclusively to football, and, even if a proportion of the accusations are true, cannot be viewed as an evil inherent in that game.

As to the effect of football upon the individual student who enters the team, the most frequently repeated objection is that the intellectual is being sacrificed to the physical, and that the man who plays football must almost of necessity neglect his studies. This, again, as we want clearly to point out, is not an objection to football *per se*, but an objection to all college athletics. As a matter of fact much of the preliminary training for football is done during the vacation period, and certainly more hours are given by the men on the crew in the scholastic period to athletic duties than are required of the football candidates.

As this article is not a general defence of college athletics, we must content ourselves with the statement that, after careful investigation we do not believe football has had the effect of lowering the general average academic standard of either players or onlookers at any of the above-mentioned universities. There has not been time to secure all the actual figures, but such good observers as Professor Richards, of Yale, and Professor Sloane, of

Princeton, are convinced that while the scholarship of the most active players may suffer a little a few weeks before the close of the season, it loses nothing whatever by the end of the year. Under the rules of Pennsylvania a student who is dropped for neglect of his studies into a lower class is thereby debarred from taking part in any intercollegiate contests until the end of the next academic year, or until he is allowed by the faculty to re-enter his class.

Of the four or five members of the Pennsylvania football team of 1892 who have now graduated, one, the captain, won in competitive examination the greatest prize the university offers to its medical class, a position in its hospital; another, who was first honor man of his class, has been made professor in the university, and still another was on the honor list. In this year's team the same proportion seems likely to continue. At Princeton two of the eleven are on the honor list and five are "far above mediocrity." At Yale the average standing of the sixteen members of the academic department who have been connected with the football team this term as players and substitutes is higher than the average standing of the best class in scholarship that has ever graduated there. At Cornell, Professor Hitchcock finds that "the men on the intercollegiate athletic teams have a standing 1.2 per cent. better than the average of the whole college." If we were selecting from any college the young men most likely to endure the strains of business or professional life in this country, and to score successes, we would be disposed to estimate at much more than 1.2 per cent. the actual working superiority of the football players over their classmates.

Of all the objections to football, the one which seems to be the most serious is that which asserts its excessive brutality. There can be no doubt that the game is one into which personal combat enters, as it does into sparring and into wrestling; and whenever this element is present in a game, there is a tendency towards methods which shall be disabling. Such games can only be kept right and proper by the strictest repression of this tendency. We suppose that even the most earnest advocates of the game will acknowledge that in the distant as well as in the near past, very frequently even in the great games, open or concealed slugging, falling on an opponent with the knees, and other methods of injuring the opposing men have been indulged in by

both teams engaged. Our contention is that these acts are not a necessary part of football, indeed are entirely outside of the game itself, though their seeds may exist in the game; are, in fact, noxious tares growing among the wheat. They can be largely eliminated, and must be if football is to maintain its place.

It is very well to say on paper that it is the duty of the authorities of Yale or of Harvard, of Princeton or of Pennsylvania, to teach each its own team not to resort to these methods, but of course the team will always respond to such teaching that it does not "slug" first and that it must defend itself if the other team assails it. The primal fault is neither with the authorities nor with the teams, but partly with the laws of the game; and largely with the umpire. No player should ever be "warned" to abstain from rough play by an umpire, and yet repeatedly we have seen an umpire warn a player, two, three, and even four times in a single game. Dr. Brooks, of Harvard, by relentlessly ordering off the field any one whom he saw guilty of rough play, has accomplished more during the past season in lessening rough play than has any other agency that we know of. If the public demand that umpires shall do their duty, eventually it will be done. What is most needed is rigidity of enforcement of the penalty. We have favored a change of rule which would make intentional foul play directed to the bodily injury of an antagonist count one in the score against the team so offending, and we are still inclined to think the idea of value. The great difficulty at present is that it is impossible for an umpire to fulfil his present duties and at the same time to watch twenty-two men more or less scattered over a football field; so that even with a Brooks as umpire we may have a player, keeping always one eye on the umpire, slugging, kneeling, or elbowing his less astute antagonist, one, two, or three times, with the grim satisfaction finally of seeing this antagonist, goaded to desperation, ordered off the field for foul play. It seems to us essential that there should be hereafter an assistant umpire, whose sole duty should be to watch the men and whose word should be as much law as is that of the umpire in debarring men for rough or foul play of any kind. Let public opinion continue to demand fair play and the secret slugging be stopped by the assistant umpire, and these practices will disappear.

It must be remembered that open "slugging" of an antagonist is not a disabling play; that the player struck is practically never

hurt seriously ; that it is bad football from every standpoint, as even if the striker escape disqualification it removes his attention from the ball and from the team movements often at critical moments, and that it is likely to die out of itself for the above reasons and under the influence of aroused public opinion.

When university teams were usually composed simply of the eleven men there was always a great temptation to the unscrupulous player to attempt to disable one of these antagonists, but at present the substitutes are so nearly equal to men of the first line that a fresh substitute is often of more value than a tired member of the first eleven, so that one temptation to rough play is, in the evolution of the game, being removed.

With unfair and foul plays suppressed, the game may be considered on its merits, and the very hold which it has secured upon the communities of the United States proves, to our thinking, that it has value, and that it meets a need of the hour. It is not a little thing that an American community shall cease for a moment its worship of the golden calf, even if it find a no more worthy idol than a football player, for that player is an impersonation of long-continued self-denial, of severe toil, of stoicism under pain, of persistent struggle for an object which is but an ideal.

We believe that it is better for the people of North America to cultivate rather than repress this sudden growth of national sport. To cultivate is to prune, and we are among those who ask earnestly, not only for the suppression of rough and foul play, but for such modification of the rules as shall lessen the danger to life and limb. It seems to us that the first of these alterations should lead to the elimination of the so-called "mass play." The old open game, more beautiful, less dangerous, perhaps more scientific, should if possible be brought back. It has been suggested that this could be done by lengthening the number of yards required to be made in the three downs. In a mass play very rarely, if ever, can more than a yard or two be made, but as the play is the surest method of making that yard or two, and as the yard or two serves the purpose of keeping the ball, the temptation to the team captain continually to use the mass play is overwhelming. If, however, the yard or two were not sufficient to keep the ball, the captain would much more often select the open play with its greater chances of no gain, but with also its greater chances of large gain.

Moreover, if the referee would peremptorily discourage the practice of attempting to gain ground after the tackle and while the possessor of the ball is on the ground, by instantly calling "down," he would prevent the heaping up of the two teams one on the other, and the consequent likely injury to the players at the bottom of the mass. The present rules permit the referee to do this. Here, again, *enforcement is what is needed.*

If in addition a goal from the field were made of more value, and if the penalty of throwing a back on a fair catch were increased, it seems to us that a far more beautiful and much less objectionable game would result.

It is said, however, that the man who does not learn a foreign language in his youth can never learn it, and as we were so unfortunate as to have been born before the modern game of football it scarcely becomes us to offer even a suggestion to the football experts, who should settle this matter. Formerly the football Intercollegiate Association, recognized as it was by Harvard University (not a party to it), had precisely such authority. To-day this football association seems to us, at least, to have no legal existence, and certainly has no moral authority. The association was composed of four members, two of these members have resigned; the remaining two cannot constitute an association. An association is a college or a collegium, in the old use of the word; the old Roman law states explicitly that three members are necessary to the formation of a collegium. Yale might well have led the athletic world if its cohorts had not this year retired in defeat. Princeton will hardly, we think, though its banners are now triumphant, claim for itself supreme leadership. Certainly, however, it would be but a graceful act for it to request from each of the three other great football universities that representative experts should be appointed who shall meet together to consider *the rules of play*. "Undergraduate rules," composition of teams, and all such burning questions should be banished from this hall of council, where the only thought should be the preparation of a practical, carefully considered code, stripping football of the evils which to-day are fastened upon it, and leaving it what we believe it to be essentially, the best and manliest of all intercollegiate sports.

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